

Remarks of David Bosso
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Before the Education Committee
On Senate Bill 24, Section 28
(Master's degree requirement)

February 21, 2012

Good afternoon, Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is David Bosso, and I am a teacher at Berlin High School. I am here today to comment on Senate Bill 24, Section 28.

As the 2012 Connecticut Teacher of the Year, I am extremely fortunate to have been publicly praised for what I love to do. Teaching is a profession like no other, and as we consider the various elements of educational reform in our state, we must bear in mind the significance of not only maintaining teacher professionalism, but indeed, we must find ways to further support it. The proposal to eliminate the Master's degree requirement for advanced certification, if enacted, will erode the very professionalism in education that so many teachers have worked for and desired.

It is safe to say that my professional and personal growth as an educator would have been severely constrained had it not been for the requirement to obtain a Master's degree. In fact, there is a direct causal relationship between my attaining a Master's degree and my presence here today.

I have two Master's degrees – one from the University of Hartford and one from Central Connecticut State University. I am currently enrolled in a doctoral program at American International College precisely because I seek to continue my education as a teacher and learner, efforts which were inspired by being required to earn a Master's degree. As a result of my work at Central, two of my scholarly works were published in the journal, *Connecticut History*, one of which, interestingly enough, was about educational reform efforts in Connecticut stemming from the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in the early 1980s. The concern that our nation's students are falling behind seem extremely similar to the fears expressed during that era. It must be pointed out that at that time, educational reform efforts in Connecticut eventually included, among other things, increasing teachers' salaries, the development of the BEST portfolio, and

requiring a Master's degree for advanced certification. Indeed, as you know, Connecticut became a national model to be emulated for its high standards for educators and its support for the growing professionalization of teaching.

My wife, with whom I work, also has two Master's degrees. Every morning before heading to school, we drink our coffee in our living room, where our framed Master's diplomas hang on our walls. We are proud of these, and we are proud of the work that they represent. We are proud that our friends, family, and students hold us in the highest regard not only because of what we do in our schools and classrooms every day, but because these diplomas embody high standards and our ongoing endeavor to be lifelong learners and to grow as professionals.

Furthermore, I have been the beneficiary of numerous professional development opportunities that have taken me to many countries throughout the world. I likely would not have pursued these trips had it not been for the initial foray into professional growth as required by our state. I have visited schools and worked with teachers who are yearning for more professional development, and they express an enormous amount of admiration for the education that teachers in Connecticut must obtain. I have been privileged to be regarded as a master teacher not only due to my experience, but because of the respect afforded to me as a result of my level of education.

I and my colleagues across the state are more effective teachers for having pursued advanced degrees, and my educational philosophy and pedagogy have been positively impacted by this work. I'm afraid that much of this never would have happened if the requirement to earn a Master's degree did not exist.

If anything, the discussion should now center on how districts and the state can find ways to further support educators as we strive to continuously enhance our profession. The concept of lifelong learning, which we model and convey to our students, is epitomized in the need to require Connecticut teachers to attain a Master's degree. As scholar-practitioners, these efforts will bolster our profession, improve education, and most importantly, better position us to serve our students. Eliminating the Master's degree requirement lessens these standards and will result in the development of a class of teachers who are lacking in skills and experience. Among the many things we can do to counter many of the inaccurate and negative

cultural perceptions of teachers is to maintain high standards for continuous improvement and professional growth.

When I began my Master's work, I had no idea the number of professional growth opportunities that would eventually come my way. Earning a Master's degree raises teachers' professional status; causes a much-needed increase in salaries that validates our efforts; improves curriculum and instruction, allows for productive and meaningful interaction with other professionals; affords important opportunities for self-reflection; opens new doors for further professional development; sets many teachers on the path of educational leadership in their schools, districts, and beyond; and positively impacts student performance and the cultures of schools. A professional class of teachers in Connecticut is a source of pride, and I urge the committee to consider the positive impact on schools, teachers, and students if we maintain this high standard.